

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (previously presented) A smart audio guide system for use in conjunction with an interactive content distribution system that includes a distribution head-end that makes programming available for viewing on a video display device at a viewer subsystem, the viewer subsystem including an audio unit to provide audio for the video display unit, the smart audio guide system comprising:

a recommendation engine for providing a customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem based upon the programming available from the interactive content distribution system and a customized viewing profile developed for the viewer subsystem;

a processing unit configured and operative to implement the smart audio guide system functions;

a smart audio guide audio package that includes at least a plurality of smart audio guide audio clips corresponding to the customized viewing-recommendations list; and

a smart guide actuator that is configured and operative in response to one or more predetermined conditions to activate the processing unit;

wherein the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are generated by a head-end of the interactive content distribution system and stored in a database at the head-end, and said processing unit is configured and operative to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in a predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit when activated to identify programs recommended for viewing at the viewer subsystem based upon the customized viewing-recommendations list.

2. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the predetermined mode is one wherein the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are

uttered without a corresponding visual presentation of the customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem.

3. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the predetermined mode is one wherein the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are uttered in synchronization with a corresponding visual presentation of the customized viewing-recommendations list for the viewer subsystem.

4. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 3 wherein the corresponding visual presentation is a graphical recommendation menu, and wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to implement a focus frame that visually focuses a corresponding program grid of the graphical recommendation menu in synchronization with the utterance of each of the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips.

5. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 3 wherein corresponding visual presentation is an electronic program guide and wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to implement a focus frame that visually focuses a corresponding program grid of the electronic program guide in synchronization with the utterance of each of the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips.

6. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 further comprising a speech generating unit, and wherein the smart audio guide audio package further comprises a plurality of smart audio guide text files;

and wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to implement the speech generating unit to convert the plurality of smart audio guide text files into the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips.

7. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the viewer subsystem further includes a viewer control unit and wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a button on the viewer control unit, which when depressed, activates

the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit.

8. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit when the video display device at the viewer subsystem is initially activated.

9. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the smart audio guide actuator comprises a set of instructions that activates the processing unit to cause the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips to be uttered in the predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit at the conclusion of a programming period.

10. - 11 (canceled)

12. (original) The smart audio guide system of claim 1 wherein the processing unit is configured and operative to temporarily discontinue the audio associated with programming being displayed via the video display device at the viewer subsystem when the plurality of smart audio guide audio clips are being uttered in a predetermined mode at the viewer subsystem via the audio unit.

13 - 18. (canceled)

19. (new) Apparatus adapted for use in interactive content distribution system, the apparatus comprising:

a recommendation subsystem configured to generate recommendations of available programs based upon viewer profile information and viewer content selection history, wherein each recommended program has associated with it a respective audio clip; and

a viewer subsystem configured to generate audiovisual signals associated with a program selection mechanism, for generating audiovisual signals including audio clips associated with at least one recommended program.

20. (new) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the audiovisual signals include image representative signals associated with an EPG.

21. (new) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the audiovisual signals are adapted for presentation via a television.

22. (new) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein programs and their respective audio clips are stored at a programs database at a head end within the interactive content distribution system.

23. (new) The apparatus of claim 20, wherein normal presentation of the EPG is modified in response to the presence of recommended content within an EPG page.

24. (new) The apparatus of claim 23, wherein an audio clip associated with recommended content is presented in response to the presence of recommended content within an EPG page.

25. (new) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein an audio clip associated with recommended content is presented in response to user manipulation of the EPG to potentially recommended content.

26. (new) The apparatus of claim 19, wherein in response to a user selection of a predefined graphical button each of a plurality of audio clips associated with recommended content is presented.

27. (new) The apparatus of claim 19, further comprising a speech generating unit configured to provide audio data related to recommended content.

28. (new) Method adapted for use in interactive content distribution system, the method comprising:

generating recommendations of available programs based upon viewer profile information and viewer content selection history, wherein each recommended program has associated with it a respective audio clip;

retrieving, from a head end, at least one audio clip associated with a recommended program; and

generating audiovisual signals associated with a program selection mechanism, the audiovisual signals including at least one retrieved audio clip.